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WINES:

Their Culture, their Qualities, and their Uses as Dietetics,

AND FOR

MEDICAL PURPOSES.

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WINES:

THEIR CULTURE, THEIR QUALITIES, AND THEIR USES AS DIETETICS, AND FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES.

From the most ancient times a cup of wine was regarded as a blessing to mankind. No people of antiquity was ignorant of the noble qualities of the fermented grape juice. Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and Egyptians, all these nations have known its exhilarating and stimulating properties. The old father of poets, Homerus, in describing the feasts of his gods, in the Olympus, never forgets to tell us how Ganymedes, the cupbearer of the divine family, filled their goblets with nectar and ambrosia; and his heroes of the Trojan war, the counterparts of his gods, enjoy the dark red wines of Greece and Asia Minor, at every meal, jointly with the huge quarters of beef on which they subsist.

The Jews, or Hebrews, also were fond of this beverage, and among the good things to be expected in the land of promise the great grapes,

too heavy to be borne by one man, are not the least features. Solomon and Jesus Sirach, both of them, sing the praise of the wine, although they also give warning not to use it immoderately. The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the old Egyptian monuments clearly show that the culture of the grapes and the use of their juice were well known to the Pharaohs of old.

The culture of the grape vine was in ancient times not in a very high state; and people did drink the juice just as nature delivered it after fermentation. The vines were left growing just as they pleased, without pruning and without much laboring and tilling of the ground. The Italian and Greek wines, therefore, were tart and heavy, and had to be mixed with water before drinking. To drink unmixed, pure wine was in these times considered the sign of a drunkard.

Charles the Great, the greatest emperor France ever had, introduced the culture of the grape vine into the Rhenish country, and in the middle age the clergy especially was given to the culture of the wine and to its use as a beverage. The best sites for vineyards, and the best cultivated ones, did belong to the convents, and the monks as well as the great cavaliers were hard drinkers. I myself remember to have read in the rules of a target-shooting society, in an ancient German town, of 1560, that no member should be allowed to continue shooting after having drunk more

than seven measures of land wine (about fourteen quarts) in one afternoon.

But in more recent times science has brought about great changes in the culture of the grape vine, as well as in the manufacture of wine. In consequence of these changes, the wines of almost every locality, where the vine is liable to grow, are improved and made of a finer taste and more generous.

The chemistry of agriculture improves the grapes, and the chemistry of fermentation, now better known than of old, does the same for their expressed juice. The vine culturist is more careful in selecting the ground and in its preparation for the reception of the plant; the grapes are only gathered with great care; when perfectly ripe, they are properly mashed and their juice is carefully expressed and handled.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE DIFFERENT WINES.

Different localities bring forth different kinds of wines, and we can classify them according to their qualities.

1. Light wines, red and white, are very suitable for every-day use as table wines. They contain no more alchohol than from three to five per cent., and they are more or less acidulous; as, for instance, the light French clarets, the lighter qualities of wines growing upon the banks of the

Rhine and the Moselle, also most of the Palatinate wines. Of the wines, we give in the list below, we should quote here, Wachenheimer, Graacher, Laubenheimer, Hochheimer (Hock), and of the clarets, St. Julien, and Chateau Margaux.

2. Heavier wines, with more than five per cent. and less than ten per cent. of alcohol, having less acidity and more flavor. The better Rhenish and Moselle wines, Hungarian and Burgundy wines, and the finer clarets, for in stance, Deidesheimer, Kallstadter, Niersteiner, Pisport, Assmanshaeuser, and of clarets, Château la Rose, Léoville, and Château Lafitte.

5. Very heavy wines, containing alcohol upwards of ten per cent., more or less sugar, are sometimes made of dried grapes, when they are called sacks. To this class belong the wines grown in southern countries, as Sherry, Marsala, Lacrymæ Christi, Tokay,— all of these being very rich with sugar; some of the Rhenish wines, as, for instance, Johannisberg, Scharzhofberg, may also be quoted here, on account of their percentage of alcohol.

4. A fourth class is constituted by the sparkling wines, commonly called Champagnes. These are wines, the fermentation of which has been interrupted, and which after bottling are still undergoing a fermentation, changing thereby their sugar into alcohol and carbonic acid.

Formerly made only in France, in the province of Champagne, they are now manufactured at any place, wherever the quality of the wine produced is able to be converted into a sparkling wine. They are light wines, containing a moderate percentage of alcohol, and, on account of the carbonic acid they contain, they are especially agreeable to the taste, and also of easy digestion without irritating the stomach.

WINES AS A BEVERAGE, A DIETETIC, AND THEIR MEDICAL USE.

In Europe and in all wine-growing countries generally, the lighter, more acidulous wines are used as a common beverage for rich and poor. The laboring man, when tired, goes and takes his glass of wine. The farmer gives his farm hands wine, cheese, and bread for lunch and in the afternoon. Everybody goes evenings and spends a few cents for a glass of wine, and nevertheless it is of an extremely rare occurrence to see an intoxicated man in these places where a good and pure wine is the common beverage of everybody. The influence of this circumstance is also perceived in regard to the mental faculties of these people. They are a good-natured, jolly and intelligent set of men, perhaps a little too quick-tempered.

In southern Germany, in France, in Switzerland, it is customary to have with every meal,

breakfast excepted, a glass of light wine; and the influence of this custom upon the general health is truly remarkable. Dyspepsia, the great scourge of Englishmen and Americans, is an almost unknown disease in these countries, and where it occurs it is easily treated and cured.

In order to explain this, we should look upon the influence the wine has upon the human body, and this being understood, we may also comprehend its use as a dietetic and as a medicine. The wine, pure as the grapes yield it, in its first stage is called must. This juice is a mixture of water, sugar, bitartrate of potash, several extractive substances from the grape skins, and vegetal albumen (a substance which is very much like the white of an egg). Sometimes it also contains malic acid, and lime in greater or smaller quantities. This must now has to undergo fermentation, whereby its sugar is split, one part being converted into alcohol and the other into carbonic acid gas. This fermentation only takes place under favorable circumstances and in the presence of a certain matter of vegetal nature, called ferment, consisting in a growth of small microscopic globules, which sprout very rapidly, and are growing in a short time throughout the whole mass of the must. They are the immediate cause of the fermentation, and by their contact the sugar of the grapes undergoes its change into alcohol and carbonic acid. The

alcohol remains in the liquid, being soluble, and the carbonic acid evaporates into the air; for the first fermentation begins very stormy, the foam rising on top of the liquid and the carbonic acid escaping with a hissing noise. After a while this stormy process subsides gradually, and the gas is formed in a less noisy manner. By and by the ferment cells, having exhausted their force, settle down to the bottom as dregs, and the must clears off. This liquid, called new wine, contains still considerable quantities of carbonic acid in solution, which is the cause of its white, sometimes even milky color, and of its peculiar agreeable and prickly taste.

After this first fermentation the wine is filled in casks, where it undergoes a slower and less stormy second fermentation, by which several substances, peculiar to good wines, are formed. For instance: The free acids still present, acting chemically upon the alcohol, form a new combination of its molecules, called œnanthic ether, giving to good wine that agreeable flavor. The bitartrate of potash settles down and crystallizes at the bottom of the cask, on account of its being less soluble in alcoholic liquids than in a watery solution of sugar.

A great part of the carbonic acid, which was in solution, escapes during this second fermentation, and the wine, from being of a whitish color and troubled, becomes clear, limpid, and of a

golden and red hue, according to the grapes it is made from. Red wines are made from red or dark red grapes, by allowing the must to ferment upon the skins, and by expressing the juice only after the first fermentation has passed off. Thereby the coloring matter, contained only in the skins of the grapes, is dissolved and communicated to the wine. If this is not done, even red and dark grapes will yield only white wines, sometimes with a light reddish hue.

When arrived at this point, the fermentation must be interrupted; for any continuation of this process over this stage would damage the produce, by the destruction and decomposition of some of its most essential substances. In order to effect this, the white wines are drawn into fresh, clean casks, impregnated with sulphurous acid by the burning of sulphur in their interior. This sulphurous acid gas is one of the most efficient means for stopping any fermentation. In red wines, the color of which would suffer by the bleaching qualities of this gas, the same end is reached by the presence of tannic acid, also contained in, and extracted from the skins, or by the addition of a quantity of pure and strong alcohol.

The fermented wine is therefore a watery solution of alcohol, or better a combination of alcohol with water, sugar, and tartaric acid, œnanthic ether; in red wines also with tannic acid. The

percentage of alcohol gives the wine what is called its strength; and the physiological influence of the different wines upon the human body depends for its greatest part upon this percentage of alcohol.

Pure alcohol is a real poison, and so strong alcoholic drinks are very deleterious to the human body. By the use of such drinks the stomach is irritated, a catarrhal inflammation ensues, ending in what is called dyspepsia or chronic gastric catarrh. The nervous system, the brain and spinal marrow are also irritated, and the habitual drinker of strong alcoholic beverages generally is utterly wrecked, losing bodily and mental health forever. But matters are wholly changed as soon as the alcohol is combined with water and other substances in such a quantity that it constitutes only a small percentage of the whole. Then it does not act as a poison to the body, but as a gentle stimulant to digestion, thereby also stimulating and enlivening the whole process of material exchanges going on in the different systems of the human body. The moderate use of a pure and generous wine, therefore, is not to be avoided and shunned; on the contrary, a general use of an unsophisticated beverage will contribute to the general health of the people, and will be a guard against many diseases arising from imperfect assimilation, and slow material exchange. Besides of these salu-

tary influences upon the body, the wine also has a generous influence upon the mental faculties. Great thinkers, poets, philosophers, have, almost without any exception, been friends of a good glass of wine. The poets of antiquity and our modern ones all together sing its praise. Nay, if we look into the holy books, we find that the psalmist, as well as the king philosopher, sing its praise, and also our Saviour uses many parabolic images taken from the vine and from the vineyard. He never was a despiser of the liquid gold flowing from the grapes. We defy any of the so-called temperance preachers to show us a single verse in the whole Bible where the moderate use of the wine (then the only fermented beverage known) is disapproved. All these passages, often quoted by the teetotalers, refer to the immoderate use of wine.

In childhood and youth, where every function of the body is regular and vigorous, a stimulating beverage is not necessary, and therefore young people should abstain from wine, or, at least, drink it in small quantities, and only exceptionally and of the lightest kinds. Adult persons, however, generally will profit by the moderate use of wine, their strength will be preserved, and their digestion will be better and more regular, if they use some light wine with their daily meals.

Older persons, whose digestion grows weak,

whose strength begins to fail, should use stronger and heavier wines. For such people the heavier old Rhine wines, the sweet and heavy Spanish and Portuguese wines, and the better qualities of California wines, are the most proper dietetic.*

From times immemorial the wine has been set upon the table at the feasts of mankind. A use so general, so old, is certainly not without its natural cause. As at such occasions people are inclined to give their stomach a heavy task to perform, they also need to give it exceptional strength. The stimulant, at the same time the most efficient and the healthiest one, is a good, generous, and genuine wine.

GERMAN WINES.

VINICULTURE ON THE RHINE AND MOSELLE.

Throughout Germany, France, and Switzerland, wherever a situation is adapted to the growth of the vine, a vineyard is established. Gentle slopes looking eastward or southward are generally selected. Chalky grounds or rotten limestone are the most desirable ones; clay

* For weak and sickly persons, the milder old wines of the second class are preferable to the heavier and stronger ones, because these latter ones would affect their nervous system in a too irritating way.

ground is to be avoided. If the ground is too rich the vine will not yield as much in grapes as upon relatively poor ground. The quality of the vines to be planted should depend upon the middle temperature of the year. In colder climates, or on colder sites, early grapes are preferred. The warmer a vineyard is, and the more and longer exposed to the rays of the sun, the better is the wine grown in it.

During summer-time, the vines are properly cared for, and as fall draws nearer, the growth and ripening of the grapes are carefully observed. In good sites, and where the proprietors desire to bring an excellent produce into the market, the grapes are picked only; when they have obtained their fullest degree of ripeness, after the stems have shrunk and the skins commence to shrink, and also only when perfectly dry from the morning thaw.

All the grapes gathered in one day are either expressed the same day, or sometimes they are allowed to obtain a still higher degree of maturity, by being spread in the sun upon layers of straw. Grapes treated in this manner yield sweet wines of great strength. For fine wines the berries are then carefully picked from the stems, or separated from them by a kind of comb, so that the latter do not enter into the press. Afterwards the berries are smashed by a wooden pestle in a large tub, and this smashed mass is brought

into the press, and the must, flowing at first from the spout of the press without great pressure, is kept separately, because it will yield an excellent wine, and sell for a much higher price, as, if it was allowed to mingle with the juice flowing afterwards under heavy pressure, and which contains more acids and extractive substances from the skins. The former is the wine destined for commerce, while the latter is the so-called Land wine, and makes the general beverage of the people.

The good qualities of a wine depend in a great measure from the careful selection of the grapes, and from the removal of all unripe or rotten berries, which will yield inferior qualities, and in second line from a careful observation of the fermentation.

Of late the Rhenish wines have for a great part been used for the production of sparkling or Champagne wines. The essential features of this manufacture are: the bottling of the wines during the second fermentation, so that a great part of the carbonic acid formed during this process is kept back in the wine, and in the admixture of a small quantity of sugar and Cognac brandy during this fermentation in the bottle.

The names of the different kinds of wine are mostly taken from the localities where they grow; sometimes, also, from the vineyard itself, especially if this yard is renowned for the supe-

rior quality raised. So, for instance, the Liebfraumilch (milk of the Holy Virgin,) is a wine growing at Worms, around the ruins of a church, formerly consecrated to the Holy Virgin.

Wines, and very good ones, are growing upon the hills bordering both banks of the Rhine from its leaving the Lake of Constance till near Bonn in the Prussian Rhenish province. But under the name of Rhine wines are meant only those wines growing in the so-called Rheingaw, or the valley of the Rhine above and below Mayence. They are more or less strong, heavy wines containing a great proportion of œnanthic ether, giving them their excellent flavor. The best qualities, generally used as dessert wines, are Johannisberger, Assmanshaeuser (red), Hochheimer, Rudesheimer, Liebfraumilh. Second qualities, but still very fine wines, are produced at Laubenheim, Nierstein, Ingelheim (red), Bingen, Bodenheim, etc.

Wines of the Palatinate, from the Bavarian Rhenish province, or the Palatinate, especially at the mountain range called Hardt. These are as heavy as the Rhine wines, but somewhat more acidulous, forming excellent table wines, stimulating the digestion and the secretion of the kidneys in a gentle manner. We shall here mention Kallstadter (red), Deidesheimer, Wachenheimer.

Nearly of the same quality, but with more flavor and lighter, are the wines growing in the val-

ley of the Moselle. The Sharzhofberg, and Brauneberg nearly equal the best Rhine wines. Pisport (from the ancient *Portus Pisonis*) nearly equals Niersteiner; Zeltinger and Wachenheimer are very good table wines, from the Moselle and the Palatinate.

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Roederer's Carte Blanche,	" " " "
" Impérial,	" " " "
" Dry Sillery	" " " "
" " Schreider	" " " "
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SPARKLING WINES.

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Flower of Marcobrunn.
Nonpareil.
Scharzberg.
Moselle Muscatel.

RHINE WINES.

Wachenheimer,	in wood and glass.
Laubenheimer,	" " " "
Hochheimer,	" " " "
Deidesheimer,	" " " "
Niersteiner,	" " " "
Rudesheimer,	" glass only.
Liebfraumilch,	" " "

Schloss Johannisberg, in glass only.
Ober Ingelheim (red), " " "
Assmannshauser " " " "

MOSELLE WINES.

Moselle, in wood and glass,
Graacher " " " "
Zeltinger, " " " "
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Brauneberg, " " "
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